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ABSTRACT

This document presents helpful suggestions (tips) for tutors. Introductory material indicates the purposes and commitment involved in tutoring. Suggestions are categorized according to general, first session, later sessions, tutoring reading, and tutoring arithmetic. Several approaches to aid a tutor-study partner relationship are included. (MJM)

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TIPS FOR TUTORS

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SP006 362

TIPS FOR TUTORS

"He believed that one man can make a difference and that every man should try."

Mrs. John F. Kennedy

Tutoring is essentially a "togetherness" or interpersonal experience; the interrelationship of two individuals working closely together. In this relationship there is no one method, no easy answer. The most success will be found with methods which you develop yourself while working with the student. Any method which helps your study-partner will be considered the best method. Tutoring tips presented here summarize suggestions which other tutors have found helpful. They are intended to serve as a guide to you in your work. They will be valuable only to the extent that you use and test them for yourself.

PURPOSES OF TUTORING:

1. To supplement institutional resources and improve the performance of the study-partner.

2. To increase the study-partners' self confidence by turning him on to new ways to achieve.

3. To motivate the student through his contact with a concerned helpful, peer model.

   Remember: Tutoring is not teaching. Tutoring provides additional assistance and support. Many educators agree that those not trained for teaching can change a student's picture of himself and his attitude through effective tutoring.

COMMITMENT: Tutoring demands a definite commitment. Please do not start unless you can be consistent throughout the program. Failure to appear for scheduled appointments, apathy or lack of subject matter knowledge, can kill a study-partner's faith in both his tutor and the program.

GENERAL TIPS:

1. Relax and be yourself.

2. PERSONAL CONCERN FOR YOUR STUDY-PARTNER IS YOUR GREATEST ASSET AS A TUTOR. Past experience has shown that effective tutoring is equally based on rapport between tutor and study-partner as upon expertise in a subject area. Tutors should work to build a relationship of mutual confidence with their tutee. Keep in mind that what you do is as much a language as what you say. How you both say and do is very important.

3. Review these pages frequently. There is a tendency for experienced tutors to forget their goals and purpose.

TIPS FOR THE FIRST SESSION:

1. Be sure that you and your study-partner have names straight. Learn nicknames, if any. It will help to write down your name and give it to your tutee. Students often are hesitant to communicate with tutors when they are uncertain of names. In addition, exchange telephone numbers for emergency communications. Make it very clear that the study-partner is free to call or contact you anytime he feels help is needed.

2. To build rapport, talk with the tutee about mutual interests and above all, listen. Attempt, mentally, to put yourself into the position being advanced by the study-partner.

3. Devote most of the first session to finding the student's learning problems. Most students will be able to tell you of their problem subjects. Once you know this, seek the cause of their problems. Some ways of doing this are:

Writing: Have your study-partner write a paragraph on some subject. Look for spelling problems, sentence structure, grammatical errors, etc. See an English instructor if your study-partner has special writing problems.

Reading: Have the study-partner read aloud from his text book. If he misses more than three or four words in a hundred, the book is probably too difficult and you should help him with his reading assignments. If he misses only one or two words and can tell you what he has read, he probably needs no help in reading his text. By having the student read aloud you can quickly detect common problems, such as guessing words from their first letter. Contact the reading specialist on your campus if your study-partner has special reading problems.

Math: Ask the study-partner to show you his books and have him do some problems in the current or previous lessons. If a book is not available, ask him what work the class is doing. Then together, make up similar problems. Seek assistance from a math instructor if your study-partner has special needs.

4. Begin tutoring at a level well within the grasp of the study-partner. This will provide an atmosphere of success. Remember, many study-partners have had little success in school and need a rewarding experience to restore their self-assurance. This atmosphere will build the student's confidence, and will help establish a good working relationship between tutor and tutee. Three corollaries to this are:

   a. It is not advisable to let your study-partner flounder on an answer for more than a few moments, especially in reading. Step in, tactfully, and help out.

b. Indicate immediately whether the student's answers are right or wrong. Let him know that you are pleased by a right answer. When he is wrong, do not show your disapproval to the point where your tutee becomes discouraged. This is very important.

c. Avoid turning this into a "con" or "ego game". Be sincere. A student may need tutoring but he is intelligent enough to spot a fake.

TIPS FOR LATER SESSIONS:

1. In general, the less work you do for your study-partner the better. Although it is quicker, easier, and less frustrating for a tutor to do a problem or an assignment, it is of little permanent help to the student. Help him learn HOW to do his own work.

   A good tutor will spend most of the time ASKING QUESTIONS, LISTENING, AND HELPING THE TUTEE TO THINK FOR HIMSELF, rather than lecturing to the study-partner.

   When you supply an answer, be sure your study-partner understands how you arrived at it. If you are not sure that he does, test your study-partner with a similar example. In this manner your study-partner should be able to handle what you are helping him with when he is in class.

2. Move on to more challenging material as soon as you have established a working relationship. Once you feel the tutoring is going well, don't be guilty of underexpectation. If you expect little from your study-partner, he will produce little. Let him know you have high expectations for him. With this encouragement he may come to have the same high expectations for himself.

3. Break your tutoring session into several short segments of various activities. Your study-partner will get less restless if he knows in advance when the session will end.

4. To the extent possible, be creative and imaginative in your tutoring methods. Look for ways to motivate your study-partner and to involve him in the activity. Do not hesitate to innovate.

5. Many of your questions about the study-partner's difficulties and solutions to them may be answered by a visit with his teacher. Teachers are grateful for the work you are doing and they can be most helpful. This will also serve to interest teachers in the program.

6. Be sensitive to the existence of emotional or psychological problems which may be affecting the performance of your study-partner. However, it is not the tutor's role to handle these problems. Bring them to the attention of his instructor or someone else whom you feel may be of service.

7. AVOID ASSUMING THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEACHER

   a. Your job is to help the instructor, not replace him.

   b. Contact the study-partner's instructor, let the instructor know you want to help.

8. Always be on time. This adds to the effectiveness of your tutoring. If you are late the study-partner may begin to doubt the sincerity of your concern for tutoring and for him.

9. Don't be afraid to admit to your study-partner that you don't know certain answers. Tell him you will find the answer and then follow through.

TIPS FOR TUTORING READING

1. If the study-partner has a culturally different background and has trouble communicating with you, talk with him, listen to him. Help him become familiar with your vocabulary. Encourage him to further develop his vocabulary.

2. Read more difficult materials to your study-partner; this allows him to hear new words and good literature.

3. Do not ask a student questions on something he has read out loud. Ask questions for comprehension after silent reading only.

4. See your school's reading specialist for special materials for extremely poor readers.

TIPS FOR TUTORING ARITHMETIC

1. Encourage drill.

2. Keeping charts of the tutee's individual progress may help keep up interest.

3. Try to devise practical problems for the student to solve. For example, problems involving money, time, distance traveled, etc.

4. Be certain that the tutee is using programmed text book materials properly.

CAUTION: Tutoring is a way of trying to help other people. It is not difficult, in trying to help others, to do more harm than good. People who offer help in a patronizing or condescending way easily can compound the very feelings of inadequacy they are trying to help the other person overcome.

To reduce this danger, there are several approaches in helping your study-partner which have proven valuable in other tutoring projects.

1. One way to avoid a patronizing tone is to relate to your study-partner as an equal. Do this in the sense that you and he are human beings with problems and a future to face. Think of working with your study-

partner, rather than talking at him. Many tutors like to think of being a friend, and the essence of friendship is the practice of truthfulness.

2. Avoid thinking of yourself, and talking to others, as the giver and the helper, or in the extreme as the saviour from the outside with the answers to all the problems of the educationally or economically disadvantaged.

3. Don't expect your study-partner to show appreciation for your efforts before you have become a friend. One tutor destroyed whatever relationship he had developed with his study-partner by repeating on two occasions, "Here I am traveling 10 miles each week to help you out of your difficulties and you haven't even finished your homework for me."

4. Empathy is an important quality to seek if you are tutoring. Have enough understanding of your study-partner and knowledge of his background and possible cultural differences so that you accept him, rather than reject him because he is not what you are. Be willing to start at his level and take his pace if you want to make progress.

5. Be sensitive in communicating with your study-partner. More than anything, this means being a careful listener.

6. Don't be quick to judge. Many of the students who are study-partners have lived a life of oppression and have been judged by society according to stereotypes. Avoid perpetuating this pattern.

7. Many of the characteristics which make your study-partner different from you, are what make him an individual. Viewed this way, his differences often appear as strengths.

8. Set the same standards of effort for your study-partner as you would set for other students. Do not adopt the attitude, "Well, he did as well as could be expected." Avoid lowering standards out of a feeling that they are unattainable. Don't allow your study-partner to just "get by."

9. Don't take advantage of a situation or relationship such as this to play "boy-girl" games. This will reduce your effectiveness as a tutor. The study-partner needs your help, not a "come on."

A Final Word: You are about to begin a commitment which can reward you with a high degree of accomplishment, whatever you give to the people you help will be worthwhile. With dedication, your contribution in time may be an immense one. Approach this commitment with seriousness of purpose and intelligence. You will get from tutoring only what you give to it.